

# **From Conception to Implementation: Perspectives from an Author of the Pew (Hopkins) Report**

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June 29, 2004  
Atlanta**



Why the Nation Needs ¶

a Health Tracking Network

# AMERICA'S

— ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

# gap



THE PEW  
... ENVIRONMENTAL ¶  
... HEALTH COMMISSION ¶  
at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health ¶



# Tracking Roots

- Conceived long before “Pew”
- Developed from the frontlines of environmental health practice
- Love Canal, Woburn, Times Beach, Stringfellow, Tom’s River
- Vision for TOSCA, ATSDR, and Right to Know
- Recognition of the need for the public health and environmental protection partnership

# The Future of Public Health

**“The removal of environmental health authority from public health agencies has led to fragmented responsibility, lack of coordination, and inadequate attention to the health dimensions of environmental problems.”**

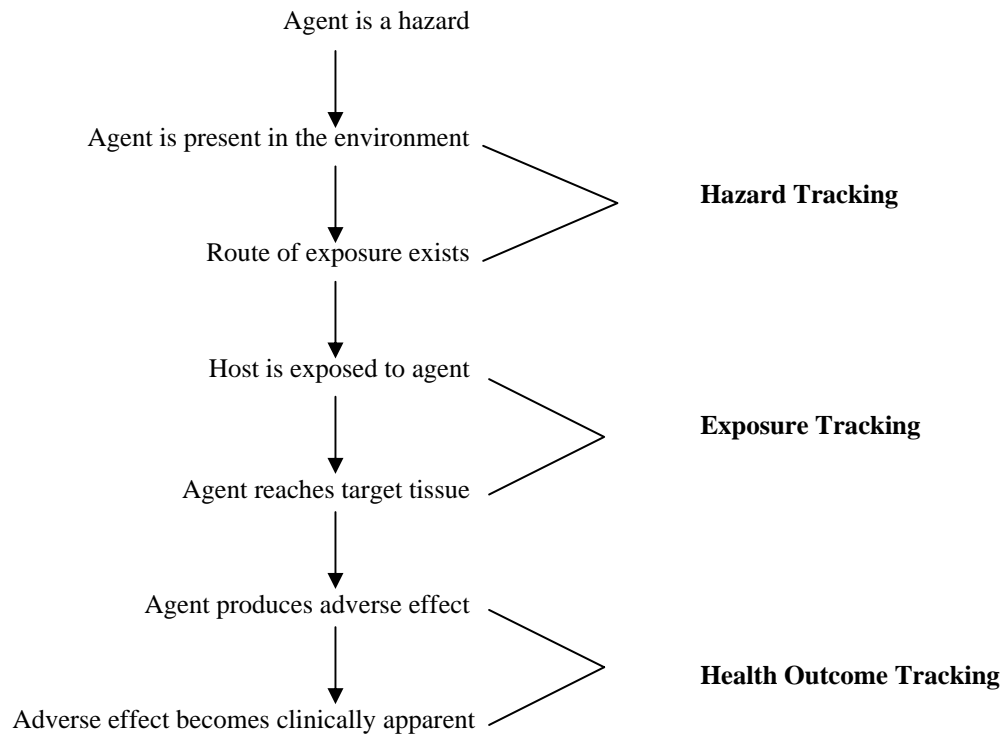
**- IOM**

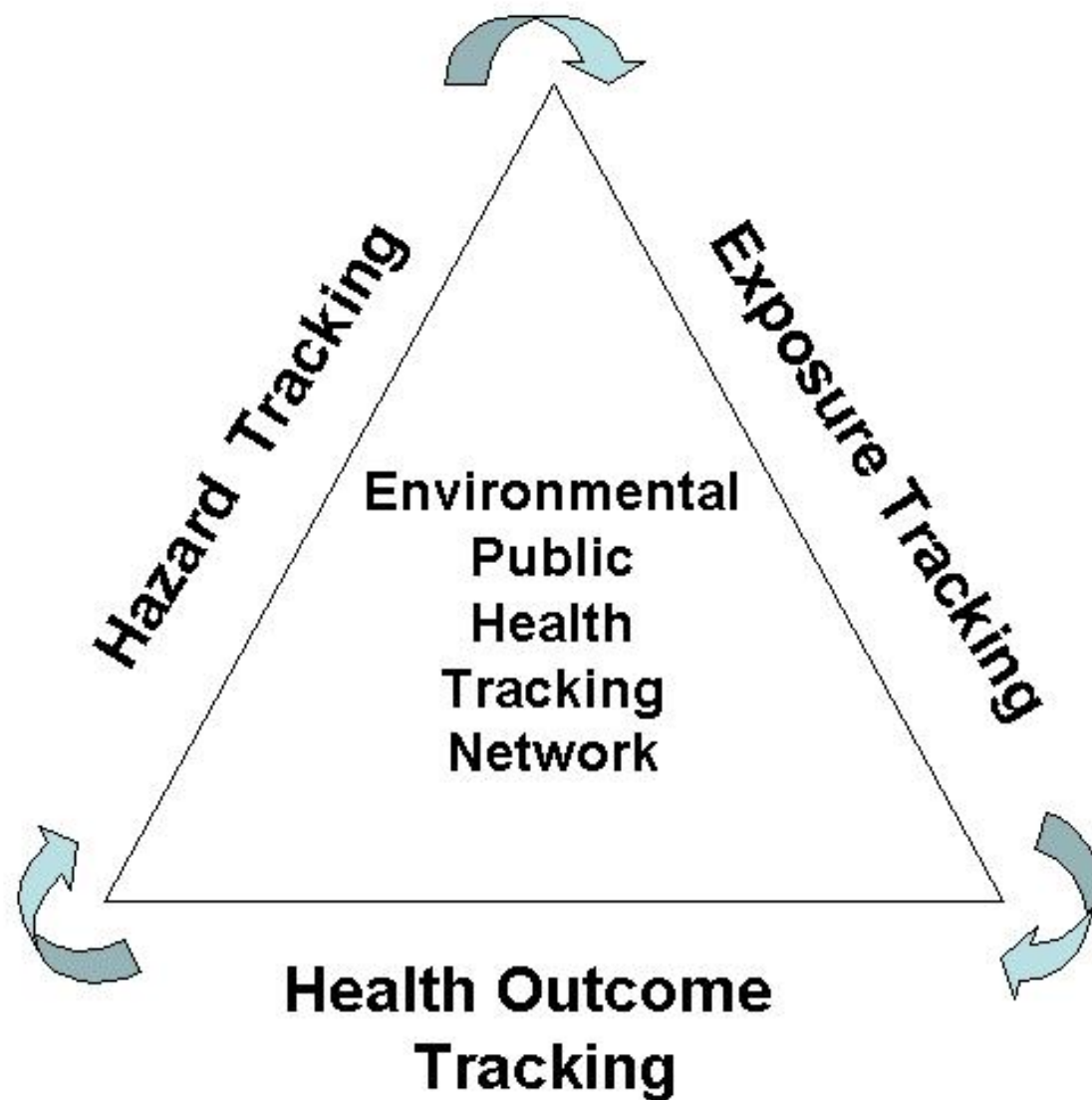
# The First Core Function of Public Health

## ■ Assessment

- Monitor health status to identify community health problems
- Diagnose and investigate health problems and hazards in the community

# Environmental Health Tracking





# **America's Environmental Health Gap: Why the Country Needs a Nationwide Health Tracking Network**

**Technical Report**

September 12, 2000

**Sponsored by:**

**The Pew Environmental Health Commission**  
At the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health

**Report by:**

**Environmental Health Tracking Project Team**  
Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health  
Department of Health Policy and Management



# **Pew Environmental Health Tracking Project**

## **State / Local Environmental Infrastructure**

**Interviews of  
State and  
Local Leadership**

- Capacity
- Needs
- Priorities
- Implementation

## **National Surveillance Activities**

**Outreach with  
Federal Leadership  
and Review of Federal  
System**

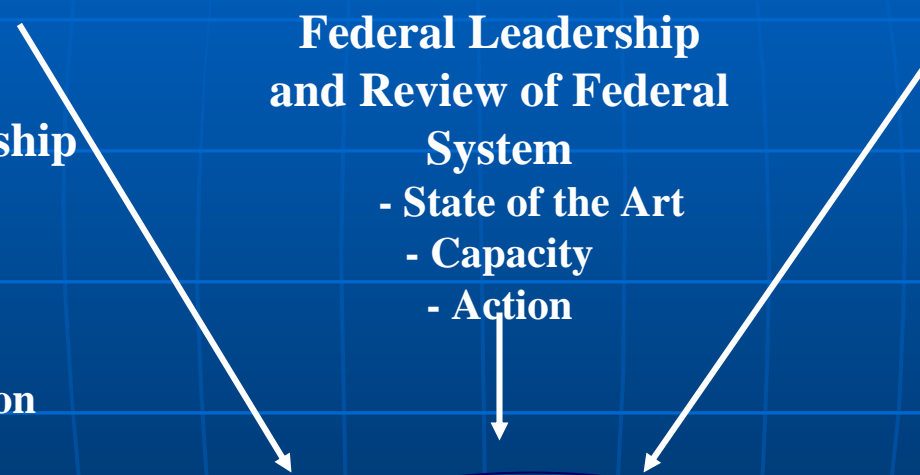
- State of the Art
- Capacity
- Action

## **Selecting Health Endpoints for Tracking**

**Examination of  
Available Information**

- Toxics Release Inventory
- Health Endpoints  
of Concern
- National Health  
Outcome Databases

**National  
Tracking  
Recommendations**

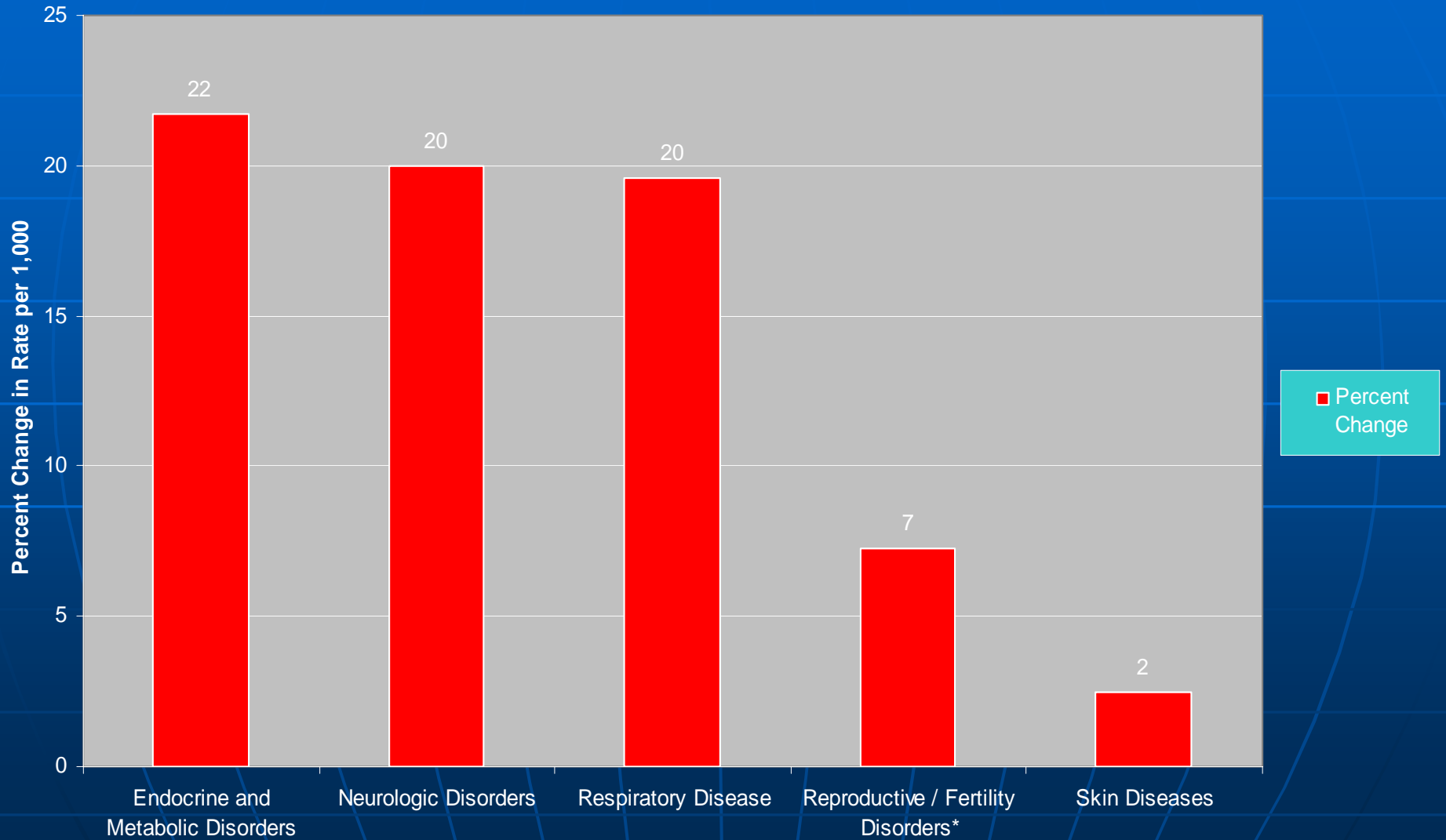


**Table 8: Ranking of Toxicants based on 1997 Toxic Release Inventory (TRI)**

<u>Types of health effects</u>	<u>Ranking based on total 1997 TRI release</u>	<u>Total Air &amp; Water Releases (Pounds)</u>
Respiratory	1	1,248,977,984
Neurologic	2	1,211,458,945
Skin or sense organ	3	1,109,718,312
Gastrointestinal or liver	4	1,086,264,404
Cardiovascular or blood	5	823,375,664
Developmental	6	811,686,192
Reproductive	7	498,142,705
Kidney	8	488,554,582
Immunological	9	234,713,891
Cancer	10	209,271,142
Endocrine	11	173,331,065

Reference: Environmental Defense Scorecard ([www.scorecard.org](http://www.scorecard.org))

# Percent Change in Self-Reported Prevalence of Non-Cancer Chronic Health Conditions National Health Interview Survey, 1986-1995



\* Change from 1988 and 1995

# Environmental Health Outcomes: Update

NHIS Adult Conditions		Rates Among Adults 18+						Change 97-02
Condition	Description	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	
Diabetes	Ever been told by a doctor	5.1%	5.3%	5.4%	5.9%	6.4%	6.5%	<b>27%</b>
Migraine headache	Had during past 3 mo.	15.9%	15.7%	15.4%	14.9%	16.6%	15.1%	<b>-5%</b>
Asthma	Ever been told by a doctor	9.0%	9.0%	8.5%	9.3%	10.9%	10.7%	<b>18%</b>
Asthma attack	Attack in past 12 mo.	3.7%	3.4%	3.4%	3.5%	3.8%	3.7%	<b>1%</b>
Chronic bronchitis	Told by a doctor in past 12 mo.	5.0%	4.6%	4.4%	4.6%	5.5%	4.4%	<b>-11%</b>
Emphysema	Ever been told by a doctor	1.6%	1.5%	1.4%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	<b>-8%</b>



# Think We're Tracking Chronic Disease?

## Think Again.

Asthma is on the rise, especially among children. Major birth defects also are increasing. But we don't know why or where these diseases strike. That's because we don't track vital information needed to identify their causes or prevent these and other serious chronic illnesses.

Most Americans think we track these diseases – which communities they strike, whether they are linked to environmental factors such as pollution, toxic waste or pesticides. But the truth is – we don't.

America needs a nationwide environmental health tracking system to provide an early warning, help prevent disease and protect our families and communities. Without this information, we are blindfolded in our fight against many chronic diseases. That's why Health-Track urges Congress and the President to take the first steps now to set up a nationwide health tracking network. Because a nation that is the world leader in the information age should understand – what we don't know can hurt us.

Think about it. Lives are on the line.

**HEALTH-TRACK**

**YOUR HEALTH. YOUR COMMUNITY. YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW.**

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# Recommendations from the Environmental Health Summit

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- Coordination of multiple agency efforts at the federal, state, and local level;
- Development of the national environmental health information infrastructure;
- Establishment of minimum performance standards to guide agency-specific tracking efforts;
- Identification of populations at high risk of environmental exposures and adverse health effects;
- Regular reporting of findings and improved public access to information; and
- Strong linkages to prevention.

## Recommendations from the Environmental Health Summit (2)

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### ➤ A tiered approach to implementation including:

- national tracking for high priority outcomes and exposures;
- a sentinel network to identify acute and emerging hazards;
- a coordinated network of pilot regional, state, and local tracking programs; and
- an aggressive research program to guide and evaluate tracking.



# Commission Recommendations

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*The Commission recommends the creation of a Nationwide Environmental Health Tracking Network that informs communities, public health practitioners, researchers, and policymakers on environmental hazards, population exposures, and related diseases and their causes –*

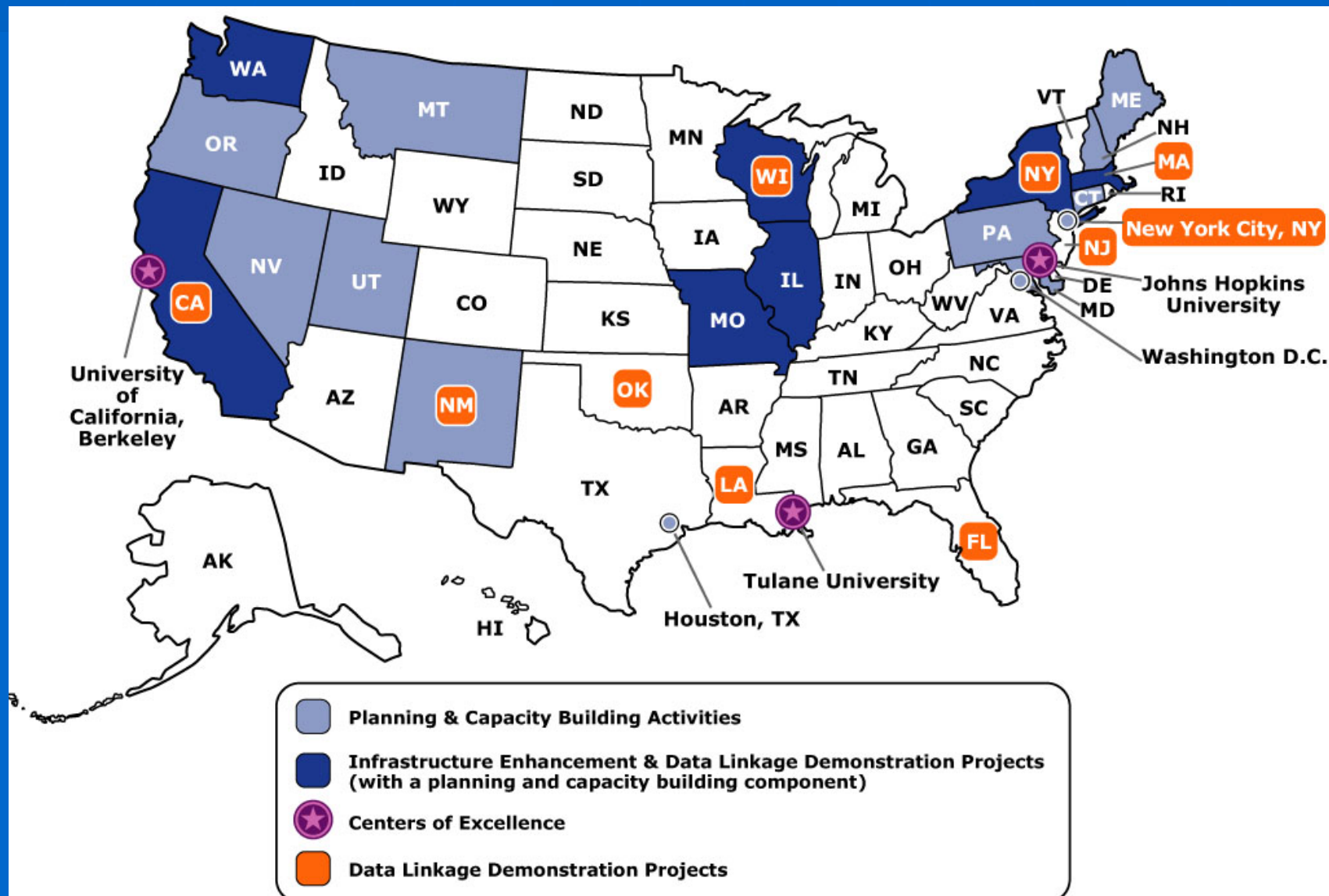
- Nationwide baseline tracking of priority diseases and priority exposures
- Monitoring of immediate health crises such as heavy metal and pesticide poisonings to serve as early warning systems
- Establishing 20 pilot state programs to allow for the addressing of regional concerns
- Developing a federal, state, local rapid response capability to investigate clusters, outbreaks, and emerging threats
- Tracking links to communities and research



# **Be Careful What you Ask For**

**Environmental Public  
Health Tracking is now a  
reality**

# CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking Program Grantees FY 2004



# Tracking Progress

- Established a new, strong network of environmental public health professionals
- Examined the national data/information resources
- Establishing environmental public health priorities
- Innovative programs, laws, and reporting throughout the states
- Starting a training pipeline
- Advancing the science

# Finding the Common Ground

Topic	Tracking Related Initiatives			EPA Indicator Initiatives		
	JHU Tracking Partners <sup>1</sup>	CSIE <sup>2</sup>	Pew <sup>3</sup>	EPA Draft Report on the Environment	EPA America's Children and the Environment	CSIE/EPA and the Aging (Draft-Do Not CITE) Indicator Topic Areas <sup>4</sup>
Air quality (ambient) [and respiratory disease]	7	X	X	X	X	X
Asthma (pediatric, all ages)	7		X	X	X	X
Air quality (indoor) [and respiratory disease]	5	X	X	X	X	X
Lead/heavy metals (poisonings)	4	X	X	X	X	X
Water quality (drinking)	3	X	X	X	X	X
Cancer (pediatric, all)	2		X	X	X	
Pesticides	2	X	X	X	X	
ALL	1					
Arsenic (drinking water) [bladder cancers]	1					
Autism	1					
Birth defects	1		X	X		
Housing	1					
Lupus (SLE)	1					
PCBs [developmental effects]	1		X		X	
Mercury (fish)	1		X		X	
Radon [lung cancers]	1					
Toxics, hazardous materials, waste	1	X	X			
UV exposures [skin cancers]	1	X				
Water quality (ambient)/water pollution	1	X				X
Agricultural runoff	0		X			
Disasters	0	X				
Noise	0	X				
Occupational disease	0		X			
Sentinel events	0	X				

<sup>1</sup>Preliminary priorities identified through telephone calls and July 2003 EPHT meeting in Chicago

<sup>2</sup>Council for State and Territorial Epidemiologists, Environmental Public Health Indicators Topic Areas

<sup>3</sup>Pew - priority topic areas identified by states, represents priority areas for all 49 states rather than specific state partner priorities

<sup>4</sup>CSIE/EPA workgroup meeting (DRAFT Findings)

# Key Areas of Interest

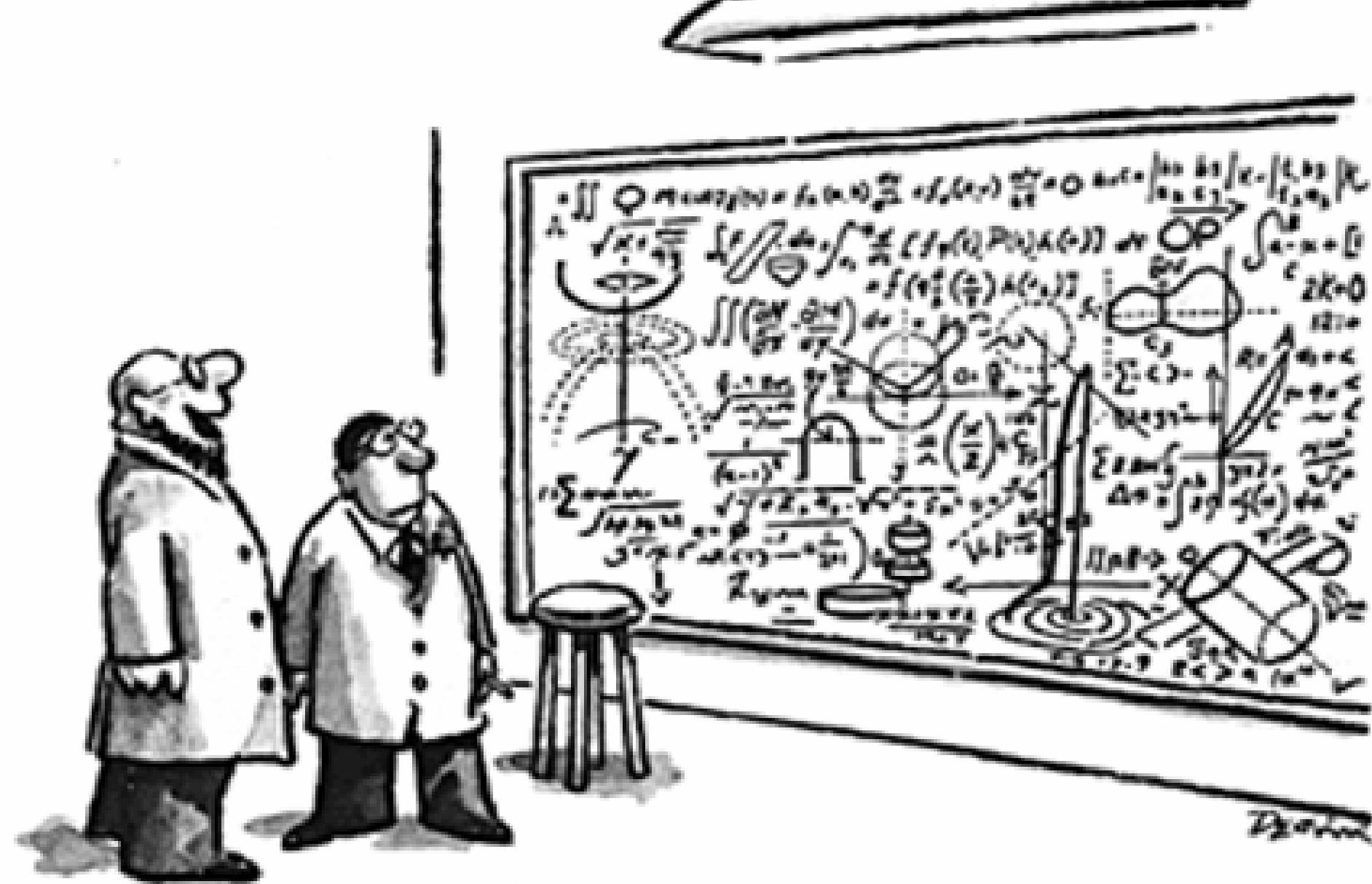
- Air pollution and Respiratory Disease
- Environmental Hazards and Pediatric Health
- Methylmercury and Developmental Disabilities and Cardiovascular Disease
- Pesticides, Persistent Pollutants, and Developmental Disabilities
- Biomonitoring
- Environmentally Related Cancers
- Cluster Approaches
- Drinking water exposures and health
- Development, the built environment and health

# Scientific challenges

- Selecting Indicators
- Interpretation of Findings
- Refining Tracking Methods
- Application to Epidemiological Methods
- Cumulative risks
- Communicating findings
- Translation to Prevention and Policy

# Tracking is Hard Work!





*"Hey, no problem!"*



# Challenges Ahead

- It's crunch time!
- Efforts are just beginning and there is a long way to go
- Fragmentation... still
  - Developing Leadership
  - Involving Communities
  - Sustainability
  - Communication of Findings
  - Getting the Data Out
  - Applications to Prevention, Regulation?

# So, how are we doing?

- There has been amazing progress in a very short time
- Tracking is leading to fundamental changes in the national approach to environmental health
- Many Pew recommendations are now reality
- If you don't believe me Google EPHT!
- There is still a long way to go
- Our challenge is to build the support through results, partnerships, resources, and measurable success.

# **Pelosi Introduces Legislation to Strengthen Public Health System's Response to Environmental Pollutants**

*Washington, D.C. -- House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi was joined today by Representatives Stephanie Tubbs Jones and Louise Slaughter, and Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton, Harry Reid, and Lincoln Chafee, in introducing bipartisan legislation to improve our public health system's ability to respond to environmental hazards.*

*October 8, 2004*

# The Future

- Tracking has the potential to be the most important national initiative for advancing environmental protection.
- Evaluate our progress toward the shared goals public health and environmental protection.
- Focus and maybe redefine our local, state, and national approaches.

# Bridging the Gaps

